

leucophaeus, common rosefinch *Carpodacus erythrinus* and Blyth's myna *Sturnus malabaricus blythii* feeding on nectar from the flowers of an *Erythrina indica* tree, which stood on the Merchinston Tea estate fence. Interestingly, on close observation, I saw a Blyth's reed warbler *Acrocephalus dumetorum* feeding on nectar in the same tree. As the bird dipped its beak inside the flowers for a relatively long time and raised it up to swallow, it is evident that it drank nectar. The insectivorous Blyth's reed warbler was observed to feed on *Salvadora persica* fruits at Point Calimere Wildlife and Bird

Sanctuary (Balasubramanian, 1996). Ali and Ripley (1983), and Cramp (1992) mentioned only insects as the food of Blyth's reed warbler. It is interesting to note that nectar also forms a food of this species. Among the plant materials, seeds of Umbelliferae and Cruciferae and black berry *Rubus* were recorded as food (Cramp 1992).

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14. SHORT-TOED LARK *CALANDRELLA CINEREA* FEEDING ON PEARL MILLET *PENNISETUM TYPHOIDES* IN RAJASTHAN, INDIA.

Short-toed lark is a common and abundant winter visitor throughout the northwest desert and semi-desert portions of India (Ali and Ripley 1986). They are gregarious in winter, preferring to feed in bare fallow fields in relatively arid desert tracts, avoiding cropland (Roberts 1992).

On October 3, 1993 while surveying the avifauna of the Desert National Park, Rajasthan, near Barna village, just outside the boundary of the park, I saw a farmer driving away 'clouds' of short-toed lark *Calandrella cinerea* from his small field of pearl millet *Pennisetum typhoides* by beating a metal box. Apparently his efforts to drive away the birds were unsuccessful, as the birds were not leaving the field but merely settling some distance away from the farmer to resume their feeding activity. On closer investigation, unusual feeding behaviour was observed.

There were 7-8 large flocks of birds hovering near the pearl millet panicles. The average height of the millet plants was about 2 m. The birds were pecking at the panicles while flying/hovering to dislodge the grain. After each bout of pecking activity lasting 5-10 seconds, they would descend to the ground to feed on fallen grains. One or two birds were sitting on half bent stems to pluck grains from the panicles. Considerable damage was done to the panicles and a large number of fallen grains were found on the ground, due to the feeding activity of these birds.

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